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October 31, 2008

The Honorable Michael B. Mukasey
United States Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Re: **Comment under Section 5**
Possible Submissions by Georgia County Boards of Registration and Elections
re: Early Voting

Dear Mr. Attorney General Mukasey:

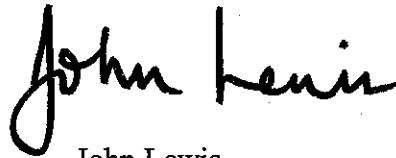
I am writing to ask that you expeditiously consider preclearance requests under section 5 of the Voting Rights Act that have been submitted by any Georgia County Board of Registration and Elections regarding the expansion of the early voting process. Today, the last day of early voting in Georgia, lines at some polling stations are wrapped around the block. Some are almost a mile long. Last night about 1000 voters in Georgia were left standing in the cold, some now unable to vote, because of malfunctioning voter registration machines.

According to reports in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* four of the five voter registration terminals at the Adamsville Recreation Center polling station located at 3201 Martin Luther King Drive S.W. failed during the early voting process. Fulton County election chief Dwight Brower said in this article that the problem originated with Georgia State Secretary Karen Handel's office, the state division responsible for elections. The article also indicates that voters were stranded for up to four hours in some cases, while the computer problems were fixed. Some voters have been completely disenfranchised by these issues and will not be able to cast a ballot in this election.

There are a number of remedies for these early voting problems that might require expedited emergency pre-clearance under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. I believe you have already received letters from several of Georgia's County Boards of Registration and Elections asking the Department of Justice for preclearance of these recommended changes to address these issues. Their requests likely include the extension of early voting hours and days to include Saturday, Sunday and Monday and increasing the number of voter registration machines and poll workers at polling sites, where large turnout is expected.

I urge you to handle these requests under a most expedited process. In the days leading up to the election, I am aware that the demands on your time are significant, however the right to vote is precious, almost sacred, in our democracy. It is critical to the credibility of the electoral process that we use every means possible to ensure free and fair access to the ballot box on Election Day. We should not allow technicalities and the incapacity of machinery to stand in our way. I ask you to use all the resources available to you to expeditiously grant preclearance to Georgia County Boards of Registration and Elections who are requesting immediate changes for the sake of the franchise. I appreciate your prompt attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "L".

John Lewis
Member of Congress

cc: Grace C. Becker, Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights
Christopher Coates, Chief, Civil Rights Division